



County Councilman David Marks Fifth District Newsletter

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MESSAGE FROM COUNCILMAN MARKS: **WORK ADVANCES ON NEW PARK IN DOWNTOWN TOWSON**

One of my priorities has been to preserve green space throughout the Fifth District. In 2012, I sponsored legislation that created Neighborhood Commons zoning, where no development can occur. More land in the Fifth District is now zoned for this open space designation than anywhere else in Baltimore County. We have also supported the opening of four new parks in Perry Hall and [the first new park along the Loch Raven Boulevard corridor](#) in a half-century, Ridgely Manor Park.

In Towson, three new parks are under development: [Radebaugh Neighborhood Park near the Aigburth Manor community](#), Adelaide Bentley Park in Historic East Towson, and Patriot Plaza in Downtown Towson. Plans were recently released for Patriot Plaza.

Patriot Plaza is the concrete area between the Courts Building and the Historic Courthouse. This deteriorating space includes a non-functioning fountain that has leaked into nearby county offices. The County Council approved up to \$4 million to “green” the plaza. The firefighter and police memorials will remain in place.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the County Council for their support of this project, as well as the Towson stakeholder organizations that were involved in the design.



When completed in 2018, Patriot Plaza will provide new green space for not only county workers and daytime visitors to Towson, but also for residents. The removal of the concrete area is also better for the environment. I look forward to a grand opening, hopefully in time for the 2018 Towsontown Spring Festival.

VOLUNTEER FOR THE CLEAN-UP OF INDIAN ROCK PARK

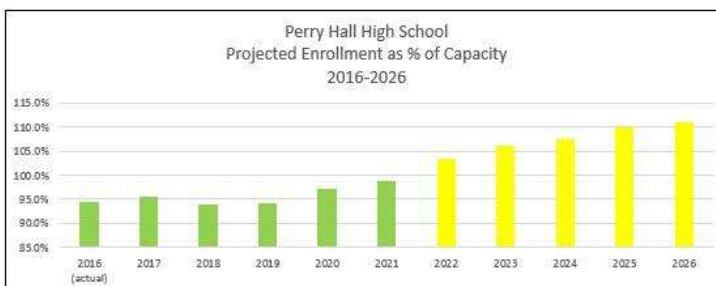
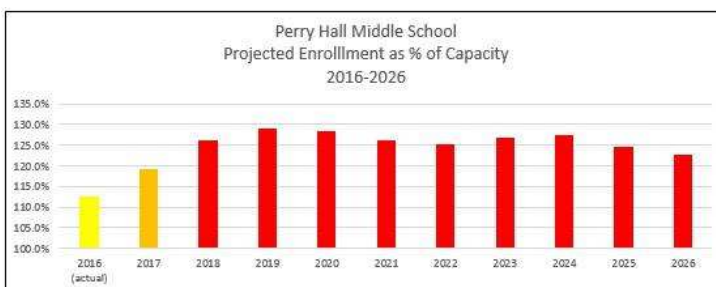
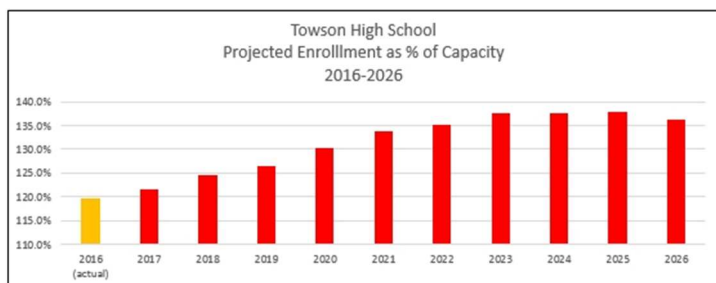
Councilman Marks will sponsor a spring clean-up of Perry Hall’s Indian Rock Park on Saturday, April 1st at 10 a.m. The park, located west of Perry Hall High School, includes a new trail with benches that have deteriorated due to vandalism. Councilman Marks is working with the Police Department to address this situation, but in the meantime, volunteers are needed to collect garbage and paint the benches. This is a terrific volunteer effort for Scouts and high school students. Contact rhensler@baltimorecountymd.gov, and show up on April 1st with work gloves and clothes.

SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM COUNCILMAN MARKS:

ANSWERING FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SCHOOL OVERCROWDING

The first public meeting I attended after my Inauguration as County Councilman was to urge the Baltimore County Board of Education to help address school overcrowding. We have made some progress—additions were built at Hampton and Stoneleigh Elementary Schools, and construction will start soon on Perry Hall's first new school in a quarter-century. A second elementary school in the Rossville area will be under construction in 2020.

It is urgent that we keep focusing on this issue. The following graphs shows the severe overcrowding at Towson High School and at Perry Hall Middle School. Overcrowding at Perry Hall Middle will also have consequences for the high school.



A lot of people have questions about how we got to this point. Here are some answers.

Why are schools overcrowded? Development plays a role, which is why our office downzoned thousands of acres of land in the past two zoning cycles. But a lot of the problem comes from demographic change, as young families move into older neighborhoods.

Why are we building elementary schools in the northeast? Yes, we need help at Perry Hall Middle School, but enrollment statistics prove the urgent need for a new elementary school as well. Without new elementary school seats, Gunpowder Elementary School will be 30 percent above its state-rated capacity by 2021; Perry Hall Elementary School, 40 percent; and Chapel Hill Elementary School, 24 percent.

Why is school overcrowding such a persistent problem? I believe Baltimore County has made fundamentally flawed planning decisions over the past three decades. In the 1990s, for example, the county government built additions at Perry Hall Middle and High Schools instead of new campuses. At the time, some of us argued for new schools, but that would have cost more money and led to controversial redistricting decisions. Now, because of those choices, Perry Hall has the largest middle school in Baltimore County.

What can be done? Baltimore County must start planning for a renovation of Towson High School and a new middle and high school in the northeast. It is ultimately the Board of Education that makes recommendations, and the County Executive who includes funding in the budget.

How can I help? You can get involved in the Towson High School effort by joining the following Facebook group: <http://www.facebook.com/THSNewIn22>. In the northeast, follow the Facebook page set up by our office: <http://www.facebook.com/newnortheastschools>.

Our children deserve a Twenty-First Century learning environment, not crowded hallways and outside trailers. I will do whatever I can to advance solutions to this problem of school overcrowding.